

Grades K-12

Life Skills

A Guide to Knowledge, Skills,
and Dispositions for Success

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Message from the Utah State Board of Education

Mission

Provide leadership, vision, and advocacy, so that all students have educational opportunities to meet their potential and achieve competency.

Utah Public Education: The Opportunity of a Lifetime

The mission of the Utah State Board of Education is to serve as a driving force in decision making. The board adopts policies, create rules, and provides educational governance that help every child succeed. During the past few years, educational policy and practice have been driven by standards, accountability, various motivators, and educational law. The results of this focus have taken many turns and become contentious, and debate within educational circles is intense.

The Utah State Board of Education has exerted much effort to foster high expectations and proven educational practices, and to carry out programs to raise academic standards and improve teaching and learning at all levels. As the Board analyzes all aspects of education, we continue to recognize that education is not solely about academics. The Board believes it is our responsibility to lend emphasis and focus on the “whole child” and his or her comprehensive educational needs, now and in the future. Learning is for a lifetime. Every student should strive to obtain it, use it, extend it, and constantly seek after learning.

In order to emphasize and stress this concept in multiple ways, the State Board and the Utah State Office of Education have requested the creation of guiding documents for use by educational practitioners, leaders, parents and others.

Such is the case with this “Life Skills” document. This publication is intended to help multiple audiences integrate these identified skills, competencies, and dispositions more effectively in the academic core and classroom instruction.

This document is the result of recently passed laws and board resolutions,

educational research, public input, educational best practices and thoughtful opinion. The need for this document has grown out of the educational belief that academic knowledge is not sufficiently comprehensive to prepare a child for the complex future and a lifetime of learning, and the resultant benefits of a quality holistic education.

This effort represents a reawakening to the importance and urgency of educating the whole child. Students need knowledge coupled with a wide range of extremely important life skills and other dispositions that develop quality behavior.

This knowledge will result in a variety of character traits that help students transfer academic learning into a lifetime of changing careers, professions, avocations, academic service to others and civic engagement. It will foster the maintenance of democracy; result in safer schools; honor diversity; and help students choose alternatives, pursue options, make decisions, think and reason, solve problems, appreciate nature, art, and music, communicate effectively, and live full and happy lives that come because of a comprehensive education and the opportunities it brings.

This publication is one way for the Utah State Board of Education to reaffirm its commitment to skills, dispositions and other essential competencies that must be taught and addressed in every classroom and at every grade level.

We challenge and invite every reader to consider how this document personally relates to his or her role and responsibilities in education at every level. Please help us put principle into practice for the benefit of every child.




Preface



The ultimate goal of the Utah State Board of Education and the Utah State Office of Education is to provide leadership, vision, and advocacy so that all students have educational opportunities to meet their potential and achieve competency.

As this goal is effectively achieved, students become productively engaged citizens endowed with the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and confidence to participate fully in democratic life. It is our hope that students will be active participants in and out of the classroom in American citizenship, with many of the same values, dreams and goals of the founding fathers for free, responsible, productive, and happy living. Further, we desire that students learn to magnify their individual gifts and be willing and able to voluntarily share their abilities and talents with their families and communities.



In January 2006, the Utah State Office of Education, at the request of the Utah State Board of Education produced a newly revised Life Skills document. It is intended to complement and integrate uniquely and effectively with all aspects of the state academic Core Curriculum.

This document describes the framework that supports and influences instruction in all content areas and guides students toward competency in thinking and reasoning skills, social and civic responsibility, character, aesthetics, communication, systems skills, and employability. In addition, it is our desire that this document will be beneficial and a key element in involving patrons and parents, promoting the essential elements of healthy physical activity and nutrition, encouraging academic service learning, and fostering a greater depth of knowledge relating to financial responsibility.



The document's introduction states:
The central purpose of education is to develop the intellectual, emotional and social understanding of all students. This purpose is accomplished by providing a system of aesthetic, physical, and cognitive education that enriches the individual lives of students, prepares them for the world of work and promotes the common good of a democratic society.

The Utah State Board of Education supports this document and challenges and invites its readers to provide the best education possible to our youth, the leaders of tomorrow.



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Introduction

“...we believe the quality of caring we give to our parents, to our brothers and sisters, to our families, to our friends and neighbors, and to the poor and the powerless endows a life, a community with caring, respect, hope, and happiness.”

Eunice Kennedy Shriver

Central Purpose

The central purpose of education is to develop the intellectual, emotional, and social understanding of all students. This purpose is accomplished by providing a system of aesthetic, physical, and cognitive education that enriches the individual lives of students, prepares them for the world of work, and promotes the common good of a democratic society.

Life Skills describe the attributes of a well educated person. This document reflects the thinking of educators, parents, students, and the community in defining a framework that supports and influences instruction in all content areas and guides character and ethics development.

Organization

The Utah Life Skills document is divided into seven domains:

- THINKING AND REASONING
- SOCIAL AND CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY
- CHARACTER
- AESTHETICS
- COMMUNICATION
- SYSTEM SKILLS
- EMPLOYABILITY

Each domain is organized into four sections:

- DEFINITION—states a research-based description of the skill.
- RATIONALE—defines why a particular skill is important and the expected student outcome.
- INDICATORS—specific measurable or observable actions for students acquiring the concepts and skills.
- KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND DISPOSITIONS—describe attributes of knowledge students should acquire and skills they should demonstrate. Educational research shows that students with positive dispositions and behaviors toward learning are more successful in school, and that effective learning requires both knowing and doing.

Introduction (Continued)

Use of the Life Skills Document

This document is intended to be used by parents, teachers, administrators, curriculum developers, education agencies, community advocacy groups, and other individuals interested in the well-being of children. The document describes the knowledge, skills, and dispositions essential for all students to be competent and successful. The overarching principles in this document guide instructional practices in the classroom and are tenets of the Utah Core Curriculum. The Life Skills Document may be used:

- To establish an expectation for classroom and school culture.
- To serve as a tool for assessing school climate.
- As a tool in the school accreditation process.
- As a tool for school community councils.
- In the development of school mission and belief statements and school improvement plans.
- For curriculum mapping, articulation across grades, and cross-curricular integration.

- To inform Core Curriculum development.
- To support student self-assessment.
- For lesson planning and course design in individual classrooms.
- For professional development.
- As a guide for establishing policy.
- To define the broader purpose of education.

Putting Principles Into Practice for Students

- Promote academic service learning.
- Build upon character education attributes.
- Incorporate knowledge, skill, and dispositions into everyday life.
- Become successful members in the workplace and society.
- Contribute to charitable organizations.
- Volunteer in community organizations and activities.
- Develop a sense of civic engagement.

Desired Results of Student Learning

COMPETENCIES

Knowledge

In this section students should be able to **know** and demonstrate an understanding of the competencies described in this document.

Skills

In this section students should be able to **do** and demonstrate their abilities using skills described in this document.

Dispositions

In this section students should be able to **become** contributing members of society using attributes described in this document.

Thinking and Reasoning

“Today’s problems cannot be solved by thinking the way we thought when we created them.”

Albert Einstein

Definition

Thinking and reasoning are the use of cognitive and logical skills or strategies that increase the probability of a desirable outcome. Thinking and reasoning are intellectually disciplined processes of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, accessing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action.

Rationale

Thinking and reasoning skills enable students to make logical choices in their lives. Students will become independent thinkers, able to apply thinking and reasoning skills strategically to solve new problems.

Indicators of Thinking and Reasoning

- Acquires, organizes, and evaluates information to make informed decisions
- Integrates new learning with existing knowledge and experiences
- Uses inquiry and technological skills to research, expand, apply, and connect knowledge
- Applies multiple strategies to solve a variety of problems
- Generates new and creative ideas in a variety of contexts

COMPETENCIES

Knowledge

Knows and understands decision making and problem solving models

Knows and understands principles of logic and reasoning

Understands the process of accessing background knowledge when organizing information

Possesses a sufficient body of knowledge to inform thinking and reasoning

Understands that inquiry is characterized by a common set of values that include logical thinking, precision, open-mindedness, objectivity, skepticism, replicability of results, and honest evaluation of information

Skills

Uses a variety of strategies and evidence to construct an argument and to defend a position

Recognizes situations in which a variety of conclusions can be drawn from the same information

Compares and contrasts specific abstract or concrete attributes

Uses various reading and writing strategies to organize, interpret, analyze, and comprehend information

Uses inquiry to ask questions and solve problems

Dispositions

Exhibits curiosity to expand learning

Enthusiastically explores concepts and exceeds the expected standard

Willingly seeks information from varied sources and perspectives to develop informed and creative solutions

Persistently seeks information to solve problems

Appreciates diverse and varied ways in which to solve problems

Seeks informed and reasoned opinions about a variety of issues

Social and Civic Responsibility

“Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.”
Helen Keller

Definition

Social and civic responsibility is the commitment to exploring and promoting the common good and meeting the needs of individuals and society without infringing on the basic rights of others. This includes participating in democratic processes, recognizing our commonalities, valuing diversity, respecting others, promoting social justice, and supporting the use of research for the improvement of the quality of life.

Rationale

Social and civic responsibility is critical to full participation of the individual in society and for society to support the individual. Students will expand their abilities to fully participate in community service, civic, and societal activities.

Indicators of Social and Civic Responsibility

- Assumes responsibility for personal actions and acts ethically (e.g., demonstrates honesty, fairness, integrity)
- Demonstrates responsible civic engagement
- Participates in academic service learning that supplements and reinforces skills, knowledge, and procedures learned in the classroom
- Demonstrates an appreciation of diversity and interdependence of all people
- Demonstrates social and environmental responsibility
- Demonstrates the ability to resolve and mediate disputes

COMPETENCIES

Knowledge

Knows how to interact socially in an appropriate and productive way

Understands the importance of diversity

Understands the history, people, and traditions that have shaped local communities, nations, and the world

Understands the purpose and structure of our nation's founding documents, civic institutions, and political processes

Understands general aspects of one's own culture, the cultures of others, and how cultures differ

Skills

Analyzes diverse viewpoints of social and civic issues in local, regional, and global events

Gathers and analyzes information on global and environmental issues and, with others, takes responsible action

Organizes or participates in academic service learning through individual, school, or community activities

Demonstrates responsibility for personal actions by acting ethically

Demonstrates the importance of cooperation among individuals to accomplish a task

Applies democratic processes to work for the common good

Dispositions

Nurtures a belief in liberty, equality, civil and human rights, personal responsibility, and the common good

Embraces fairness, honesty, integrity, and personal efficacy

Willingly chooses to effectively work as a member of a team

Willingly recognizes different points of view in a positive manner

Willingly and appropriately responds to the needs of others

Character

“Life is a series of experiences, each of which makes us bigger. For the world was built to develop character, and we must learn that the setbacks and grief which we endure help us in our marching onward.”

Henry Ford

Definition

Character is the acquisition, internalization, and application of commonly held and time-honored principles which promote optimal personal growth, establish an upright citizenry, and support the common good.

Rationale

Personal growth and character development are the foundation of a successful and independent lifelong learner. Students will develop personal qualities such as self-esteem, self-discipline, integrity, honesty, responsibility, sociability, and personal wellness for healthy living.

Indicators of Personal Growth & Character Development

- Identifies personal goals, organizes and maintains information, monitors progress, and engages in self-assessment
- Identifies one's own strengths and weaknesses
- Demonstrates leadership attributes
- Exhibits empathy and self-discipline
- Demonstrates understanding, friendliness, adaptability, empathy, and politeness
- Uses the process of self reflection to facilitate personal growth
- Demonstrates honesty, courage, integrity, kindness, morality, and respect
- Identifies appropriate courses of action by working toward agreements with others
- Exerts a high level of effort and perseveres toward the attainment of a goal
- Demonstrates an ability to identify, avoid, escape, or manage potential risk situations
- Demonstrates an understanding of financial responsibility
- Demonstrates an understanding of health and wellness, including nutrition and exercise

COMPETENCIES

Knowledge

Understands attitudes and attributes of self that contribute to achievement in life

Understands self and the consequences of personal actions

Understands processes of setting and attaining goals

Understands the rules of friendly, social behavior

Understands how to access, analyze, and use resources to promote physical, social, and emotional wellness

Understands principles of personal finance to make informed decisions

Skills

Interacts well with others and participates effectively as a member of a team; promotes teamwork and group collaboration

Demonstrates consideration of and empathy for the experience and perspective of others

Recognizes how character and behavior affect and influence the actions of others

Manages conflict effectively and devises win-win solutions

Practices leadership skills, and assumes leadership roles, in a variety of situations

Uses resources to be prudent financial managers in a variety of ways

Dispositions

Seeks and models positive personal development, learning, and growth

Believes in own self-worth and maintains a positive view of self

Actively participates in and understands management of personal savings and investment

Enjoys participating in activities that promote physical fitness and healthy living

Exhibits honesty, courage, integrity, kindness, morality, and respect

Aesthetics

“The world is but a canvas to the imagination.”
Henry David Thoreau

Definition

Aesthetics is the capacity to sense, appreciate, create, and respond emotionally to beauty in both human endeavors and the natural environment.

Rationale

Aesthetics helps us connect emotionally to what is being taught, making learning more meaningful and powerful. Aesthetics encourages innovation, creativity, and new ways of seeing and doing through a variety of disciplines and help develop emotional beings who are alive and contributory.

Indicators of Aesthetics

- Engages in activities for aesthetic enjoyment and personal growth
- Appreciates the subtle beauties inherent in everyday life
- Distinguishes the qualities that define excellence in human endeavors
- Expresses feelings evoked from aesthetic experiences
- Understands and appreciates the intricacies and elegance of nature, the arts and ideas
- Considers aesthetic qualities when creating, designing, or performing

COMPETENCIES

Knowledge

- Understands that aesthetic appreciation is transferable to personal and working lives
- Understands that aesthetic elements are found in the arts, humanities, sciences and the natural world
- Understands how art helps to define a culture
- Understands how the creation of art, music, dance, drama, literature, and poetry are designed to evoke emotion

Skills

- Communicates with self and others through the forms and processes of the arts, humanities, and sciences
- Recognizes aesthetic elements in the arts, humanities, and sciences
- Interprets contribution from all areas of life in terms of its aesthetic values as well as technical excellence and meaning
- Uses innovative and creative approaches to design and perform tasks
- Identifies aesthetic elements in the environment and their interrelationships

Dispositions

- Creates, presents, and reflects on works of art with confidence, skill, enjoyment and aesthetic awareness
- Appreciates aesthetic diversity among cultures
- Expresses ideas, feelings, and experiences through processes associated with each of the arts
- Cultivates creativity in everyday life

Communication

“To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others.”

Anthony Robbins

Definition

Communication is the art of expressing and exchanging ideas and feelings. Communication is a reciprocal process that includes the selection, analysis, and dissemination of information to others using a variety of methods.

Rationale

Communication skills are essential to successful performance in the workplace, society, and interpersonal relationships. Students will learn techniques to communicate clearly and use modern technology effectively.

Indicators of Communication

- Selects, plans, and organizes ideas to communicate
- Communicates with clarity, purpose, and understanding of audience
- Actively listens, responds appropriately, and acknowledges the ideas of others
- Integrates and uses a variety of communication forms and skills (e.g., verbal, non-verbal, written, electronic, listening)
- Communicates using technology with developmentally appropriate and accurate terminology
- Understands the implications/consequences and the ethical uses of technology
- Recognizes, analyzes, and evaluates various forms of communication

COMPETENCIES

Knowledge

Knows there are a variety of traditional and technological tools available to gather and disseminate information

Knows how to convey information verbally and in written form

Understands that listening is essential to effective interpersonal communication

Knows and communicates a variety of conflict management strategies appropriate to the individuals and situations

Skills

Uses the appropriate communication strategies for a given situation

Listens respectfully and objectively and offers constructive feedback

Writes with clarity and purpose to accurately convey information

Uses technology to enhance a message

Uses reading and comprehension skills appropriate to the situation

Dispositions

Values the variety of ways in which people communicate and encourages multiple modes of communication

Listens well, seeks clarity and mutual understanding

Respectfully considers others' views before commenting

Recognizes and appreciates that communication styles vary among diverse groups and cultures

Systems Thinking

“Being passionate about your work allows you to be in love with your job. When your work is your passion, you will not see your work as a job—it is your life.”

Dean Sanders

Definition

Systems thinking is the understanding of the roles within complex systems and how they function. Systems thinking requires an understanding of how parts of the system are connected, anticipation of the consequences of change, and the monitoring and correction of performance.

Rationale

Systems thinking is necessary to understand one’s work in the context of those with whom one works. Students will identify systems, function within them, improve upon existing systems, and design new ones.

Indicators of Systems Thinking

- Gathers information about how the system is intended to function
- Understands, works within, and improves a system (e.g., school, work, government, team, financial)
- Knows how social, organizational, and technological systems work, and operates efficiently within them
- Finds the right people to ask for information and resources
- Functions within the formal and informal structure of the system
- Works cooperatively with others and contributes to group goals with ideas, suggestions, and effort

COMPETENCIES

Knowledge

Understands the existence and interrelationships among differing systems

Understands the structure and function of a particular system

Understands social, organizational, and technological systems in the workplace

Understands how various systems work (e.g., political, school, banking, workplace)

Skills

Articulates the components of diverse systems

Acts and evaluates own role within a system

Compares and contrasts systems in order to be able to function within them

Modifies an existing system to adapt to changing demands

Dispositions

Accepts the functions and parameters of a system

Appreciates the attributes of a system

Strives to maximize the benefits of a system for all participants

Is willing to ask for assistance in navigating a system

Employability

“All dreams can come true—if we have the courage to pursue them.”

Walt Disney

Definition

Employability is the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labor market to realize potential through sustainable employment. For individuals, employability depends on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they possess, the way they use those assets and present them to employers, and the context within which they seek work.

Rationale

Employability is about being capable of obtaining and keeping meaningful work. Students will be able to obtain and practice the skills necessary for successful performance in the workplace.

Indicators of Employability

- Possesses flexibility, adaptability, and the capacity to cope with and manage change
- Demonstrates self-motivation, dependability, loyalty, and initiative
- Exhibits analytical and decision making abilities
- Uses effective communication and interpersonal skills
- Participates as an effective member of a team
- Demonstrates organization, planning, and prioritization abilities
- Recognizes the impact of technology on business and industry
- Exhibits leadership abilities
- Establishes and maintains an educational plan that maximizes career choice

COMPETENCIES

Knowledge

Understands and possesses an awareness of the need to develop networks and contacts

Understands the major components that contribute to the success of a company

Understands the academic skills needed in several occupational groups

Understands how one's role as a student is like that of an adult worker

Understands the importance of daily attendance and completing tasks in a timely manner

Skills

Uses organizational skills to promote goals and objectives of the organization or team

Identifies personal interests, abilities, and qualities of character that lead to a career path

Uses acquired knowledge to choose among a variety of career paths

Uses change as an avenue for developing positive opportunities

Uses school and community resources to learn about career choices

Dispositions

Demonstrates a willingness to work with diversity and tolerate diverse viewpoints

Demonstrates positive ways of performing work activities

Seeks to identify own personal interests, aptitudes, and abilities

Responds proactively to a variety of leadership and management styles

Exhibits a willingness and readiness to work

Values and takes pride in one's workmanship



DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The Utah Life Skills document is the result of a collaborative effort among universities, districts, teachers, parents, and the community. A steering committee, composed of representatives from across the state, was formed to direct the development of the Life Skills document. The writing committee wrote the document, incorporating guidelines from the steering committee, and an advisory committee provided feedback to both groups on the document. Committees were composed of members from the State Board of Education, the Utah State Office of Education, universities, and districts, as well as administrators, specialists, teachers, parents, and community members. The committees collaborated and revised the document, which was then presented to focus groups and at public hearings across the state. Feedback and suggestions received from individuals in these groups were carefully addressed. After revision and consensus on the final document among committees, the document was presented to the State Board of Education for final approval.

Special thanks go to all the individuals who shared so much of their time and expertise in developing the Life Skills document.



The ideas reflected within this Life Skills document incorporate many important attributes of a well educated person. It is important that all students receive the opportunity to learn and apply essential life skills so that they may become active members of society. Today's society is very complex, and students are part of a growing and changing global economy. The Life Skills document addresses a variety of competencies needed for students to become successful, contributing members of a democratic society.

This Life Skills document should not be treated as a separate document. It should be viewed as a companion to the Core Curriculum and embraced by all teachers of all subjects in grades K–12. Developing life skills is essential for all students to prepare them to meet the challenges of an ever-changing world.

To Parents—Parents are the first and most important teachers in their child's life. The Life Skills contained in this document should be taught in schools to supplement what is already taught at home. By acquiring these skills within both home and school, students will appreciate the importance of these skills and become lifelong learners and successful in a global community.

To Students—To function successfully in today's growing global economy, it is important for all students to have the opportunity to learn and apply Life Skills at school.

To Teachers—Life Skills should not be a separate entity from the Core Curriculum. They should be woven into the subject content area in order to address the skills that are important for students to acquire and become successful citizens.

To Administrators—Life Skills are important concepts that should be embraced by all—students, parents, teachers, and administrators. It is essential that schools as a whole support the development and teaching of Life Skills to help students appreciate the importance of acquiring and applying these skills.